

COBBETT'S WEEKLY REGISTER.

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TO

MR. BROUGHAM.

*On his Doctrine, relative to the
Privilege of Parliament with
regard to publications respect-
ing the Reports of the Speeches
made in the two Houses.*

Kensington, 16th July 1822.

SIR,

You observed, in your speech in the House of Commons, on the 10th of this month, that it was necessary to *put down a system*, which threatened to tear up by the roots every vestige of Parliamentary Privilege. I have read that speech with great attention, and have no hesitation in declaring, that, if your principles, as conveyed in that speech, were acted on, every vestige of liberty

of the press, or of safety for character, would be completely at the mercy of any man who might, by no matter what means, obtain a seat in the House in which that speech was delivered.

Your doctrine is this; or, I believe it will be best first to take your words, as reported in the Morning Chronicle. “Whatever step should be taken he hoped
“would be unanimously adopted;
“the House was bound to do so
“if it were only to express its
“determination to *put down a*
“*system* which had been acted on
“in some cases, and which *threat-*
“*ened to tear up by the roots every*
“*vestige of Parliamentary Privi-*
“*lege.* — (Hear, hear!) There
“was no shadow of comparison
“between an attack, however
“gross and indecent, upon that
“House in its corporate capa-

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"city, and an attack upon an in-
 "dividual member, singled out by
 "a party for the performance of
 "his public duty, that party coun-
 "tenanced and supported by ano-
 "ther party whom he, (the Mem-
 "ber) felt it his duty, as it were,
 "to put upon trial. Members of
 "that House would be found ready
 "to do their duty in spite of the
 "general attacks which were,
 "and which might be made, upon
 "the House in its *collective capa-*
 "city; but if an individual were
 "to be *singled out* by a party,
 "with whom, in the fair discharge
 "of his duty, he came in contact,
 "he did not see how gentlemen
 "could be found fearlessly to dis-
 "charge their public duty, more
 "especially the most *invidious*
 "part of it."—In another part of
 the debate you made other obser-
 vations: but to them I shall, per-
 haps, come by-and-by.

The Morning Chronicle has
 pretended, that, by attacks, allu-
 sion is here made to *challenges* to
 fight duels; or to attacks of a real
 bodily character; but these never

could have been in your contem-
 plation; or, at least, that alone
 could not have been in your con-
 templation; because, though you
 talk about singling out, you also
 talk about *gross and indecent at-*
tacks, which epithets could not
 possibly apply to bodily attacks;
 but must necessarily refer to at-
 tacks by the pen.

Your doctrine is, then, that it is
 possible that there may be pro-
 priety, in attacking the House in
 its collective capacity; but that, it
 is impossible for Members to dis-
 charge their public duty, if they
 are to be singled out by any one
 with whom they may come in
 contact. By coming in contact,
 you clearly mean, speaking of the
 character or conduct of indivi-
 duals; for, you afterwards say,
 that this coming in contact is the
 most *invidious* part of their duty.

The substance of the whole then
 is this, that it is contrary to the
 Privilege of Parliament, for me,
 for instance, to name you, for in-
 stance, at all, in print, and with
 disapprobation of you, let you say

what you will of me in your place in Parliament; for, to name you, to say that you said this or that, to prove that what you said was erroneous or false, is to attack you. Thus you are *singled out* and *attacked*; and this you contend is a breach of the Privilege of Parliament. It follows of course, that Knatchbull was to say in his place in Parliament that *my character as well as conduct were reprobated by all honest men*; and that I, if I made a publication, referring to this speech, and denying the truth of Knatchbull's statement respecting me, was to be deemed guilty of a breach of privilege, and was to be imprisoned in a gaol, or otherwise dealt with at the discretion of the House.

Expositions and arguments are wholly useless in a case like this. The blood that does not boil at it is base beyond expression; and, as the *New Times* observed the other day, the law may say what it will; but to this the people will never submit, until a complete despotism

be proclaimed and established by force. I shall, therefore, not waste my time in reprobating this doctrine of yours; but shall endeavour to show, the very great utility, as well as the justice, of acting upon principles, the contrary of those which you have laid down.

If, in consequence of a misstatement or wilful calumny; or, in consequence of any attack of any sort, upon me, I were to lay the blame upon the whole House, instead of laying it upon the person who had committed the offence against me; how injurious this would be to all the other members; as well as how unjust! What a confusion would there be of right and wrong; what absurdity in my manner of acting, and how comparatively impotent any attempt that I might make to defend myself! When Mr. Scarlett called me a contemptible scribbler; when you denominated mine the worst part of the press; when Sir James Mackintosh drew that memorable contrast between me and his friend Mr. Perry, saying,

that the severe laws which were proposed were fit enough in the former case but not in the latter; when Mr. Canning would drive at the whole herd rather than suffer the mischievous beast to escape him; when Mr. Wodehouse ascribed to me the desire to inflame the people and spread disaffection in Norfolk: when these things took place, what injustice should I have been guilty of, if, in my comments, I had driven at the whole House, and not singled out my man? The thing is so absurd as well as so unjust that it will bear nothing in the shape of an argument. When my able friend Mr. John Calcraft, late Clerk of the Ordnance, said, that, if he had been at the Kentish Meeting, he would have made a speech, to make me mount my horse, and ride off home as quickly as possible, was I to impute this to the whole House, and tell the whole House (as I told him), that, if they would call another Meeting, I would be bound to make them mount their horses, and ride off

home, and that the only question would be, whether they should ride with their faces to the heads or the tails of the horses? Was I to laugh thus at the whole House, instead of laughing at my friend Mr. Calcraft? What an absurdity! Why, the whole House laughed as well as I; and what is more, you set them a laughing yourself, by calling my friend Mr. Calcraft the *Great Kentish Orator*. So that, here would have been pretty confusion; the House laughing at my friend, and I laughing at the House and my friend both together, and all from the same cause.

There may be cases, indeed, where the House, by making itself a party to the attack upon the individual out of doors, justifies an application of the censure to itself. This was the case when the *witticism* respecting the *rupture of Ogden* was sported; for the reporters told us that there was a loud and *general laugh*! but this has, I must confess, been seldom the case. I am well in-

formed, that, when Knatchbull was inveighing against my *doctrine* about the Debt, he was loudly cheered, particularly by those who sat near him ; but that, when he came to those personalities, which, if uttered at all, ought to have been uttered at Maidstone to my face, the House *did not* cheer ; and that even those who sat round about him, discovered evident signs of a feeling very different from that of satisfaction and approbation. Would it not have been, then, great injustice in me to fix his conduct upon the whole House ; to impute to you, for instance, a share of the calumny that he was uttering ? Yet, according to your doctrine, this is what I must have done, or sat in silence, while three hundred newspapers were conveying about the world the speech of a Member of Parliament, representing my character as well as conduct to be such as to be *reprobated by every honest man*.

There are other ways, too, besides that of direct attack, in which

individuals, out of doors, may be *wronged* by speeches made in Parliament. Suppose a man were to foresee that St. Paul's would tumble down, if certain digging and grubbing and poking about at its base were persevered in by a parcel of mole-like people ; suppose he were to *oretel* this ; supposing the mole-like architects to go on with their *grubbings* ; suppose the building to begin to tumble about their ears ; suppose this matter to be mentioned in Parliament : suppose one of the Members to say that he had foreseen the same thing, and another of them to say that it was impossible to be foreseen by any human being ! Now suppose all this, would not the man, who had really foreseen the calamity, who had foretold it repeatedly, and years and years before it had taken place ; who had been laughed at for his forebodings ; and who well knew that the thing had been foretold by nobody else ; would not such man have a right to complain of these two Members ;

would he not have a right to make his representations upon the subject, even for his own sake; and would it not be his duty to do it? Without such remonstrance how would the public be to be guarded against the mole-like gentry and their abettors another time; and how is such man to remonstrate with any propriety without naming, without *singling out* (for, to single out is to name, and nothing more), how is such man to remonstrate with any effect, and in a manner to excite any interest, unless he address himself to the particular parties by whom the injustice has been done?

There are cases that do not come even so closely as this to an individual out of doors, and that yet justify him in making his commentary somewhat particular and personal. Suppose a Member to say, that nothing has been done, for any certain time past, worthy of approbation, in the Parliament, except certain things that he names. Suppose those certain things that he names have really

done nothing; suppose four millions of taxes have been taken off during the Session; suppose that *two persons out of the House* have manifestly had a large share in taking off these taxes; have not those two persons a right to remonstrate with that Member? Not very harshly, to be sure; but, when my Lord Milton was, the other day, ascribing all the good deeds to you and Mr. Wyville, whose motions had produced nothing; when he was omitting all the exertions that had produced the taking off of four millions of taxes, including a very large part of that worst of all taxes, the salt tax; when he was doing this, and saying not one single word about the great exertions of those two persons out of doors to whom I have just alluded; when he was doing all this, and taking no sort of notice of the *Farmer's Friend*, and the *Farmer's Wife's Friend*, who had split themselves up into more than *fifty thousand* pieces, and had been talking to the people in almost every parish of the king-

dom at one and the same time ; had not these two persons out of doors some little reason to be discontented with his Lordship, who had been silent all the Session himself, and who now broke silence for the purpose, as it were, of not doing justice to these two uncommonly active and public spirited persons ? And how, pray, were the *Farmer's Friend* and the *Farmer's Wife's Friend* to state their case to the public, to put forward their fair pretensions, and to obtain justice for themselves, without naming Lord Milton ; that is to say, according to the phrase that you have chosen to use, without *singling out* that Noble Lord ?

You will here remark, perhaps, that merit is always modest ; and that these two great enemies of taxes, ought to have left their merits to be discovered by the public. I am of a different opinion, and particularly in cases like the present. We are speaking of speeches in Parliament ; and we know that they are circulated all over the world free of

expence to the parties who make them. Therefore, if the speeches be such as to bring forward Adam Smith, Hume, Locke, and God knows who, while they are silent as to him who has really developed all the causes of the calamities that oppress the country ; it becomes an act of *injustice* in those who make those speeches ; they make use of their means of circulating speeches for an unjust purpose ; and it is the duty of the party who ought to be mentioned with honour, to expose and to lash, as far as he dares, the conduct of such speech-makers. Their speeches are a tacit attack upon him ; and, having no other means of redress, he has a clear right to obtain it through the press if he can, and in his endeavours to obtain it, the *singling out* mode is certainly the best because it is the most manifestly just.

These observations are general ; but now, before I come to the application of your doctrine to cases in which no particular individual is aggrieved, let me

make a remark or two (for we shall get on best with plain dealing) on the game which has been going on for now about sixteen years between me and the "*Education of the country*." It has been an object of considerable importance, not only with the men in power, but with those out of power, to depress, to degrade if possible, and finally, to render of no importance, an individual of the name of William Cobbett. This is perfectly notorious to the whole country, who have observed, that, however the fashions may differ in other respects, they all agree here. This has shown itself in so many ways, and so many hundred of proofs could be cited of it; it has, besides, become so flagrant, upon so many occasions, that there is not a man in the country that has a doubt upon the subject. The whole of the "*Education of the country*," or rather that which has the impudence to call itself such, has been, in this respect, one compact body, always moving on as

if it had been an individual. The source of this lies here: "*the Education*" saw that I possessed great industry and great perseverance. It would have taken me by the hand and lifted me up by degrees, if I, like so many others, had first *prostrated myself before it*. This I was resolved not to do. "*The Education*" perceiving that I was not to be gained by blandishments, and held in subjection to its will, and having a dread of my power to do it harm, very naturally took the course of destroying, crushing, or, at the very least, keeping down. I, on my part, by no means backward in perceiving the feeling and intention of "*the Education*;" and knowing well my want of means of the sort necessary in the way of *rising*, as naturally, set myself to work to *pull down* the "*Education*." And, at this game, of *pressing down* and *pulling down*, "*the Education*" and I have been for the last sixteen years. Sometimes the chances have been on

my side ; sometimes on that of "*the Education*," which, being a sort of corporate body, has had the chances of sickness and death on its side. Nevertheless the game seems at last to have taken a very decided turn in my favour. And this I owe to a virtue for which very few people give me credit, but in which, as far as relates to such matters, I am exceeded by no man living ; and that is *patience* ; a cool *waiting for events*, which enables a man to *lay the ground of his triumph long beforehand* ; and upon this subject, and in the way of illustration, I will relate to you an anecdote, very well worthy of being remembered by "*the Education*," and strictly belonging to the matter before us, as well as to those great matters which now agitate the public mind.

The next day after Gibbs, Ellenborough, and their associates, had got me safe in Newgate, an American friend of mine, who had the clearest and soundest head of almost any man I ever knew in

my life, and for whom I had and still have a very great personal regard, came to see me in a very miserable hole, though better than that to which I had been sentenced, and from which I finally ransomed myself at the expence, for *lodging alone*, of *twelve hundred pounds*. Being seated, one of us on each side of a little bit of a table, he said, looking up into my face, with his arms folded upon the edge of the table, " Well ! they have got you, at last. And now *what will you do* ?" After a moment or two I answered, " What do you think I ought to do ?" He then gave me his opinion, and entered pretty much into a sort of plan of proceedings. I heard him out, and then, I spoke to him in much about these words : " No, *Dickins*, that will never do. This nation is drunk, it is mad as a March hare, and mad it will be till this beastly frolic (the war) is over. The only mode of proceeding to get satisfaction requires great

"patience. The nation must
 "suffer at last, and greatly and
 "dreadfully suffer, and in that
 "suffering it will come to its
 "reason, and to that justice of
 "sentiment which are now wholly
 "banished. I shall make no
 "immediate impression by trac-
 "ing the paper-system to its
 "deadly root. The common
 "people will stare at me, and
 "the rich ruffians will sneer;
 "but the time must come
 "when all will listen; and my
 "plan is to *write that now*
 "which I can hold up to the
 "teeth of my insolent enemies
 "and taunt them with in the
 "hour of their distress."——
 "Aye," said he, "but the
 "worms may be taunting you
 "before that time."——"No
 "matter," said I, "for though
 "fame, after the worms have been
 "at work, is a foolish thing, re-
 "collect that I have *no other line*
 "*to pursue*. By pursuing this, I
 "secure a *chance* of final success
 "and satisfaction, and by no other
 "can I perceive a possibility of

"obtaining even that chance." I
 then described to him the outline
 of what I intended to do with re-
 gard to the paper-system; and
 after passing a very pleasant after-
 noon, during which we selected
 and rejected several titles, we at
 last fixed upon that of "*Paper*
against Gold," which I began to
 write and to publish in a few weeks
 afterwards, and which, at the end
 of thirteen years, I hold up to the
 noses of the insolent foes who then
 exulted over me, and tell them,
 "This is what you got by my
 "having been sentenced to New-
 "gate; this was the produce of
 "that deed by which it was hoped
 "and believed that I was *pressed*
 "*down* never to be able to stir
 "again." I did not expect that
 the public would pay attention to
 what I wrote. I cared nothing
 about it. I no more looked for
 any effect from it within ten years
 than a farmer looks for the wheat
 harvest in March. But I was sure
 the time of harvest would come;
 I was quite sure of that; and I
 enjoyed by anticipation more plea-

sure, as far as I know, than I enjoy at this moment.

This was a new epoch in the progress of my mind. I now bent my whole force to one object, regarding every thing else as of no consequence at all. The pursuits of agriculture and gardening filled up the moments of mere leisure and relaxation. Other topics than that of paper-money came now and then to make a variety; but, this was the main thing; I never had any hope in any thing else; and nothing else was an object of my care. Whether I were rich or poor I cared not a straw. I never cared in my life how I ate, drank or slept. I had Newgate in my recollection, and the paper-money for my polar star; and between these, in spite of a great deal of pressing down, I have performed more in the pulling down way, than, I believe, was ever performed by any other man. I might forgive my foes now, though I will not be hypocrite enough to say that I do; I might forgive them, for I was even with them

long enough ago; and, in a letter to Mr. *Dickins*, written about two months back, I asked him if he did not think that I had lived to receive my *satisfaction*.

This *pressing down* and *pulling down* game would be mere matter of amusement to me now; but really it becomes something of a different character when I reflect on its *consequences*. Understanding, as I do, and long having understood, as I have, all the causes which have finally produced this horrible state of things; and constantly active as I have been in displaying that knowledge before the nation, with such singular clearness and simplicity of style and manner, a considerable part of the people has always gone along with me, and I have thus *anticipated* the expression of thoughts and opinions, that might have occurred to and been entertained by others. Those opinions, always correct, received the reprobation of "*the Education*" only because they were *mine*. Resort was therefore had

to something else; and, of course, to something erroneous. It has been impossible to adopt a wise measure without taking something recommended by me. With this everlasting pen of mine in motion to take any thing from me by *stealth* was impossible; and to take it openly was prohibited by pride, by envy, by malice, by all those detestable feelings, that disgrace the heart of man, and that cause the ruin of nations. On my part there has always existed the determination that nothing should be taken from me by *stealth*; to this I still adhere, and, if the transgressor escape my lash he shall be more fortunate than mortal ever was before in this world.

On mere trifles the fate of countries frequently turns; and now let me frankly tell you, that the very first thing that seriously roused my indignation, after my return to England from America the first time, was, *seeing you and Horner put into Parliament*, while, I felt, without any reasoning about the matter, that you

were both together, as politicians, compared with me, what a reed is compared with an oak. I had not then even thought about Parliamentary Reform. It was a subject that had never entered my mind in a serious manner. But there must always be a something to awaken the first thought upon any subject; and, it is by no means unfrequently the case, that that first thought arises out of some feeling or passion which sinks away during the contemplation of the subject. Certain it is, that the seeing in Parliament such a man as *Horner*, especially, did produce a great effect upon me; and upon looking back to the Register of that date, I think I should be able to trace as regularly as possible, the degradation first, and afterwards the fall, of the Whig faction to that very act.

I have reason to congratulate myself upon what took place then. It is possible, and barely possible, that I might have prevented the present calamities, and the still greater calamities that are at

hand ; but while that is only barely possible, and while it is also possible, that I might have been so committed with, as to share in the degradation of the Whig faction, it is quite certain, that nothing that parties could have done, or that kings could have done, would have placed me in the situation where I now stand.

A more interesting question is *how we shall carry on our game now !*

Whether "*the Education*" have any stomach left for *pressing down*, or whether it have had enough of it ; whether it have had a *belly-full*, as they say of the boxers, and be inclined to cease from endeavours which have hitherto proved so fruitless. As I observed in one of my Letters to Lord Grey some time ago, malicious conduct seldom fails to meet with chastisement except it be perpetrated against the supple and cowardly. Of this I now remind "*the Education*," and inform you, in its behalf, that it shall never commit against me, any offence either express or *tacit*,

without receiving a just and full measure of punishment.

Leaving you to express your astonishment at all this "*disgusting egotism*," and leaving the whole band of Edinburgh Reviewers (if their book be yet alive) to participate with you, I now proceed to the remaining part of my subject ; namely, the effect which your doctrine would have in those cases where the speech of a Member of Parliament contains nothing injurious with regard to any individual whatever. Your great objection is, to Members being "*singled out*." In the first place, they are forward enough, in general, to single themselves out. They not only write out their speeches for the newspapers, but very often publish them in pamphlets ; and your prohibition would prevent an answer being given, even to these latter.

But, without going this length, what would have been the situation of the country at this moment if I, I myself I, had suffered the monstrous doctrines of Mr. Ri-

cardo to remain unrefuted? What would have been its situation, if the ravings of Webb Hall, at one time so popular in the House, had passed without a comment? And do you believe that four millions of taxes have been taken off in consequence of the answers which Lord Liverpool, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Castlereagh, and Mr. Huskisson, received in the Houses; do you believe, that these taxes have been taken off so much in consequence of the answers which these gentlemen received in Parliament, as in consequence of the answers which they received out of Parliament? If you do, I can assure you that you hold an opinion very different from that of all the rest of the country except the "Education."

Yet, how were these speeches to be answered if the makers of them were not to be *singled out*? How was Mr. Ricardo to be answered so effectually as by showing that he held a different doctrine in different speeches. Mr. Huskisson's is a case exactly

in point. He now contended, that the farmers and landlords would be able, without utter ruin, to pay the present taxes, though we had come back to the prices which were in existence before the war. In 1815 he had contended, that they must have double the price that they had before the war, to enable them to pay the present taxes; and he then contended, that, without that double price, or something approaching it, the farmer could not pay the present taxes, *though he paid no rent at all*. What could be so powerful as this statement, as an answer to Mr. Huskisson. It was perfectly irresistible. It made his opposition to the reduction of taxes not worth a straw. It was one great point gained. Under such a statement he could not proceed with any face. He was compelled to yield, out of mere decency. And, will you still contend that a Member is not to be *singled out*, and brought to the bar of the press; and that to put forth a statement like that here alluded

to, is to "tear up by the roots every vestige of Parliamentary Privilege"?

The Parliamentary Debates are, in fact, publications of the speeches. If the House will not permit any body to publish its speeches, that is another matter; but the House now permits, in short, it authorizes, its speeches to be published from one end of the kingdom to the other; and shall it refuse to permit commentary upon those speeches? Does it wish to have all the talk to itself? Wish to have the liberty of promulgating just what it pleases, and at the same time wish to have the power of punishing all the rest of the nation for making a single remark on what it says? There is a law to punish us for attempting to bring the House into contempt; but never, according to my judgment, had any thing a tendency to bring it into contempt half so much as your doctrine.

In another part of the debate the Morning Chronicle reports

you to have said, that, "Where a *Letter*, REFLECTING upon a Member of that House was published with the *name and address of any individual attached to it*, he thought such a case afforded strong presumption in the exercise of their *inquisitorial control*; and that they were entitled to *call on such person to answer for his conduct*, or, at least, to *explain it*."

Now, here is every description of the Letter that I am now addressing to you, except that this Letter may want, as I hope in God it does, the quality of "*reflecting*;" for that, it appears, is to constitute the sin. If, by reflecting, you mean, casting a suspicion on the soundness of your doctrine, and leaving the natural deduction to be drawn, then this letter does reflect on you. But what writing in *answer* to any man; what writing which questions his facts, disproves his facts, refutes his arguments; shows him, in short, to have put forth what is not true; shows him to have been

guilty of falsehood or of folly ; what such writing does not *reflect* upon a man ? It was clearly to reflect upon Mr. Ricardo, to demonstrate the falsehood of his doctrines—doctrines, too, which had earned him the title of Oracle even from you. Was it not to reflect upon Mr. Huskisson, to show the direct contradiction between his opinions of 1815 and those of 1822 ; and is it not to reflect upon Mr. Peel to talk, as we all do, about the supreme follies of all the babble of his Bill and all the mischiefs it has produced, unaccompanied as it was by those measures which would have rendered it just and safe, which were recommended *by me*, in a Petition (*too long* for Lord Folkstone to present to the House,) and which were, and perhaps because they were recommended by me, rejected ?

Your doctrine would cut both ways : take it altogether, it must soon put an end to all debate. None of us must write about any thing said by any of you, though

a Member were to utter things too indecent to be named. In the first place you insist upon liberty of speech ; next you permit the publication of the speeches, which is the same as ordering it, seeing that the thing is *sure to be done* ; and if no commentary be to be made upon these speeches, there is no safety for the character of any of us ; the sweeper of the street's may become even blacker than he is from your tongues, while some base and hungry ruffian, to curry favour with a cabal, may, with impunity, insult the King upon his throne, and call him "*Nero*" with as little ceremony as Knatchbull called me a person of reprobated character.

In conclusion, Sir, let me observe, that it is best for us all to *keep our temper*. Nobody can say, that I have not kept mine for thirteen years past ; and, it is now the turn of the "*Education*," which, however, has this consolation, that its turn will not last *so long*. While it does last, pray

keep yourself cool, and let us see the thing end without getting angry with one another.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient and

Most humble Servant,

WM. COBBETT.

TO

LORD MILTON.

On the Debate on Mr. Western's Resolutions.

Kensington, July 14, 1822.

MY LORD,—The debate on the Resolutions proposed by Mr. WESTERN, on Wednesday last in the House of Commons, contained matters which I think worthy of some particular remarks; and as your Lordship took a very conspicuous part in this debate, I think it proper to address those remarks to you, notwithstanding your "Honourable and Learned *Friend* the Member for Win-chelsea," has thought it right to

denounce the doing of precisely such a thing as this, as a breach of the privilege of that body to which you both at present belong.

Mr. WESTERN brought forward resolutions, in number eighteen, and in length, quite surprising. They were by no means such, as, in my opinion, were suited to the intended purpose; some of the facts in them are not true; several of these facts, even if true, lead to confusion and error, owing to an unwise selection, and an obscure sort of statement; and upon the whole, formed a motion against which I should certainly have voted if I had been in the House. A simple declaration of the fact of the increase of the value of money, in consequence of legislative measures, and the consequent enriching of tax-eaters at the expense of all the rest of the community, would have been sufficient. If any thing had been added, it ought to have been a distinct declaration of the justice and necessity of speedily reducing the receipts of the tax-eaters, the

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fundholders included. Instead of this Mr. WESTERN travelled into comparisons about gold and wheat, and God knows what besides ; and he concluded with a resolution, not clearly pointing out any thing to be done ; but hinting, broadly enough, at a bringing back of the infamous paper-money, or at an alteration of some sort, or other in the value of the money of the country.

The motion was lost without a division ; but that is nothing as to the question ; that is nothing to do in deciding the opinions of the public. It is not the result of the debate, but certain things that are said by the speakers, that I think worthy of attention. Mr. WESTERN, in his description of the state of the country, as produced by the cash payment measures, said nothing that was not prepared to his hands even before the passing of PEEL'S Bill. He asserted that those measures had violated all existing contracts, and said, that they could have proceeded only from *ignorance*, a

thing which I have said about ten thousand times.

Mr. RICARDO came next ; for the Ministers seem to have taken no part in the discussion, except as far as related to Mr. PEEL, who made a single remark, on which I shall observe by-and-by. Mr. RICARDO, who is so well known to have been the principal authority on which PEEL'S Bill was founded, did little more than repeat those absurdities which have been so often published under his name, and so often exposed by me. He denied that *Peel's Bill* had been the cause of the distress ; and asked, whether it were not a notorious fact that, "*before that Bill was passed*, prices had not greatly fallen." It is not for me to call this disingenuous or to give it any character whatever ; but, though this fact is notorious, it is not more notorious than the fact that it has *never been denied* ; but always stated ; and that it is not more notorious than the fact, that the fall in prices has never been ascribed to PEEL'S Bill *alone* ; but

to the whole series of measures, beginning with the Bill that provided for Cash Payments in six months after the Peace, and ending with PEEL'S Bill. Mr. RICARDO might, therefore, have saved himself the trouble of resorting to this species of argument. The fallacy has long been exposed; and if it still has the power of deceiving in the Honourable House, he may be assured that it has that power in no other place.

This gentleman is abundant in absurdities; and he has now found out that the distress may be traced to *the great influx of gold into this country; to the improvements in agriculture; and to other causes* which he did not mention; and having said this, he, with all the self-complacency imaginable, asked, "how, *then*, could the distress of agriculture be imputed to the alteration in the value of agriculture!" Just as if his assertions about the influx of gold and the improvements of agriculture, had been, upon his barely

making them, taken and universally acknowledged as *undeniable truths*; when I pledge my life, that there is not one single man in England, out of Bedlam, besides himself, that regards them in that light.

The speech of this gentleman was a tissue of unmeaning phrases that I should have thought wholly unworthy of notice, had it not been for the two observations upon which I am now about to remark. The first of these was, that, if, as Mr. WESTERN had asserted, the rents had been wholly taken away by taxation, it would be better for the landlords to come to his plan of paying off the debt, *by giving up part of their lands!* Having proved, in my letter to Lord LIVERPOOL of 1820, that this plan would take away *the whole of the lands*, I shall not waste the time of your Lordship, and of my readers, by going over that proof again here; and shall only further remark, on this part of the speech, that the perfect ease and carelessness, with which Mr.

RICARDO talked of the matter ; of its being better for the landlords to have *some property*, than no property at all ; and of his regarding their rents as he did every other article in the market ; I shall only observe, that this carelessness ; this as the French would call it, *nonchalance*, with which this gentleman talked of the property, of the estates, of the Landlords ; this coolness, this sort of gibing, with which he talked of its being better to leave them something than nothing ; I have only to remark, that God, in his wisdom and justice, never provided a more suitable punishment for those who set up the outcry ; the false, the base, the hypocritical outcry, against the poor *Spenceans* in 1817 ; and who applauded their being shut up in prison on a charge of *High Treason*, because they, in their reveries ; in their abstract nonsense, talked of a *division of the land* !

The Spenceans called the land the *people's farm* ! They mixed up their political economy with

what they said were the principles of the Christian religion. But, be their absurdities what they might, did they go *farther* than to take the land from the landlords ? Was there a man in England, who believed that there was real danger from the projects of the Spenceans ? Was there a man in England who did not know that the entertaining of these projects was confined to some dozen or two of persons in a very obscure state of life, and without any means of any description to render them formidable ! Yet (and what man in England will ever forget this !) it was seriously and solemnly stated, in the Report of the Lords as well as in that of the Commons, that the disaffected persons, against whom SIDMOUTH'S terrible Bills were levelled, aimed at a subversion of property, to be effected by a *new division of the land*. Reformers, Spenceans, all were lumped together ; all loaded with this charge ; and all thereupon made liable to be shut up in dungeons upon the bare suspicion

of a Secretary of State! Many were so shut up, while their wives and children were suffering from want; many, from such shutting up, were ruined in their affairs, ruined in their health, and one man, *Mr. Riley*, unable to support the torment and gloom of imprisonment, put an end to his existence in a dungeon!

Let that never be effaced from the minds of Englishmen; and let those who have survived the gloom and the torment of the dungeons of that day, exult with me, where they now hear a defender of the funds, proposing a division of the land, with as much carelessness as he would set about carving a pullet or a pie. Those who exulted at the torments and the insults inflicted upon the people in 1817, ought to suffer, not only loss of estate; but loss of every thing, life only excepted, and *that* they ought to be permitted to preserve only that their sufferings may be prolonged. Their sufferings have, as yet, hardly begun; and, in the pro-

gress and termination of them, the world will receive a warning the most striking that Providence ever furnished to man.

The other observation of Mr. Ricardo was this, that, if the House interfered with Peel's Bill, *London would be all in confusion the next day*; and that all would be ruin. He means, I suppose, that the paper bubble would burst; and the whole race of Jews and Jobbers would disappear, as the slugs do before the face of a scorching sun. To that corrupt, that cormorant, that infernal race, it might be total ruin; but, as to the fact about the House interfering with Peel's Bill, the House has *already interfered*, by the Small Note Bill. The avowed object of Peel's Bill was, a return to the *ancient currency* of the country; and the Small Note Bill is intended to prevent, in some degree, a return to that currency. More will be done in the same way, during the next Session of Parliament; but, at any rate, here is an *interference*. The House

has already interfered. Let it be observed, however, that this man of practice about the funds, acknowledges that the whole thing would be blown up, if PEEL'S Bill were repealed; let it be observed that he acknowledges that; and all my readers know well, that, if it be not repealed, and the interest of the Debt not reduced, the men who were dungeoned in 1817, will have ample vengeance on those who insulted them, and who laughed and sang and triumphed, when the news arrived that the troops had marched a whole body of *petitioners* from their place of meeting into a gaol, without warrant, or without even a shadow of a legal proceeding. The men who stood in that gaol-yard two nights and a day in the month of March, with the wet dripping on them, will have to rejoice, that those, who then mocked them, have now to be objects of mockery and scorn in their turn.

It is perfectly true, that, to repeal Peel's Bill would produce a blowing up. It would be an open

declaration of bankruptcy, on the part of the Government. No man would rely on it any more. A hundred of the thing that they call three per cents. would soon sell for no more than ten pounds; and, in a short time, not for the price of a leg of mutton. This would, indeed, enable the Government to *get rid of the Debt*; but, (and this is the thing!) it would, to a certainty, *rid the nation of the Boroughmongering system*! If a *legal tender* be continued, and especially at the mother bank, after next May, it will be a declaration of bankruptcy; and a useless declaration too, for, there must be something more than even that done to give relief, except the Debt called National be reduced. All the struggles; all the writhings and twistings of the **THING**, will prove unavailing. There can be no relief, without a total alteration of the *whole system*; and the only question is, whether that shall be effected quickly, through the means of Reform, or whether it shall be left to effect itself, in

another and very different sort of way.

I now come to the speech of your Lordship, the substance of which was this: that you disapproved of all schemes for raising prices; to lessen taxes was the way to relieve the land; that the farmer would be worse off next year than this year; that it was the interest of the public creditor that taxes should be reduced; that you disapproved of the Kent Petition, and hoped the example would not be followed; that the greater part of the distress arose from the changes in the currency; that you had not much pity for the Country Gentlemen, as a *class*, they having supported the system of extravagance; that the effect of the cash-measures, "had been anticipated by him (in a speech made at the time,) by the *London Tavern Petitioners*, by Dr. Copplestone, and others;" that a *large reduction* of taxation was the only remedy; that you had looked at the proceedings from a

distance; that neither side of the House had done its duty, and that you did not think much of any of the motions that had been made, except those of your learned and Honourable *friend*, the Member for Winchelsea (Mr. Brougham) and the Honourable Member for York, Mr. Wyville, the former of whom proposed to stop the Sinking Fund, and the latter to take off ten or twenty millions of taxes.

I shall take these in their order. I agree with your Lordship, that nothing ought to be done to *raise prices*; I agree with you, that to take off taxes is the way to relieve the land, and to relieve every body else except the tax-eaters; I also agree with you, that the farmer will be *worse off next year than he is this year*, though I cannot but recollect, that this is directly in the teeth of Lord FITZWILLIAM's statement to his tenants when he reduced their rents last fall, the erroneousness of which statement was so clearly exposed by me in my *rustic harangue* at Huntingdon, made soon

after that statement was promulgated. But, I now come to matter much less evidently true in point of fact, and surprisingly less reasonable in point of opinion. I agree with you that the changes in the currency have been the immediate cause of the greater part of the distress; but, as to your assertion, that those whom you call the *public creditors* are *interested* in the reduction of taxes; and as to your *disapproval of the Kentish Petition*, I totally disagree with you; and for the reasons which I am now about to state.

Lower down you say, that you approve of the motions of Messrs. BROUGHAM and WYVILLE. By-the-bye (to interrupt myself a little), though I am aware, that your Lordship is one of Burke's *Corinthian Pillars*, and, of course, can take liberties wholly unbecoming in those of the Doric and Teutonic Order; and not to be tolerated in us brick-wall and pavement mortals; though I am well aware of this; though I

make allowances accordingly, and am by no means disposed to affix the epithet *arrogant* to your Lordship's observations, I must, nevertheless, be allowed to say, that, if I had been in your place, and had (from whatever cause) been *absent from my duty* in Parliament during nineteen twentieths of the Session, I would not have taken upon me to say that neither side of the House had done its duty; and if I had, having been absent all the while, erected myself into *sole judge* of all that had been done, I would not have selected for my exclusive approbation, two motions, which had really produced *no effect at all*, while, in my lumping disapprobation, I included all the motions which had taken off *about four millions of taxes*, and, when, amongst the taxes taken off, was a very great part, at any rate, of the cruel, odious, and impolitic tax upon salt.

To return: lower down in your speech you say, that you approve of the motions of Messrs.

Brougham and Wyville; the first, for stopping the Sinking Fund and the latter for striking off ten or twenty millions of taxes. Ow- ing, perhaps, to my being rather nearer to the spot than your Lordship, I perceived *no such motions*, made by these gentlemen. Mr. Brougham *talked* about something indeed; he talked about all manner of things, and for a great many hours; and, I dare say, he did *talk about the Sinking Fund*. He talked; oh! God, how he talked! but, indeed, my Lord, he never made any *proposition* for stopping the Sink- ing Fund. Neither did Mr. Wy- ville make *any proposition* for taking off ten or twenty millions of taxes. Neither of them made any distinct proposition; neither of them did any thing that had *any effect upon the country*: any thing that did any good, or that was calculated to do any good.

But, to come back to your pro- position, that the public creditors ought to desire such reduction of taxes; you must suppose, then,

that they ought to desire a reduc- tion of their interest; and yet, wonderful to relate, *you disap- prove of the Kentish Petition!*

It is impossible to account for the whims and vagaries of some minds, from which whims and vagaries the Corinthian Order does really seem to be full as much liable as any other. You would take off ten, or you would take off twenty millions of taxes; and yet you would not reduce the interest of the debt. Now, the whole of the taxes collected in Great Britain, including the cost of collection, amount to little short of *sixty* mil- lions a-year. Take off ten; that is to say, a *small* part of the pre- sent burdens. Will that relieve the farmer? Your Lordship ought to know that it would not be equal to the degree in which he has become *worse off* during the last eighteen months. Take off twenty millions. Will that do? Your Lordship ought to know, that even that will not place him where he was at Michaelmas 1819, that is to say, long after *his ruin had*

begun. If he is to be *worse off* *next year* than this year (though four millions of taxes are taken off) how is the taking off of twenty millions to place him where he was even after his ruin had begun? It is not to be supposed that you did not concur in the circular letter addressed by Lord Fitzwilliam to his tenants last fall. That letter described things as having come to a *settled state*; it described prices, as having come to their *lowest*. You have now changed your opinion. You now think that the farmer will be *worse off* next year *than this*, though four millions of taxes have been taken off. So short a time having taught you to change your opinion upon so material a point, a little more time may induce you to change it again; from which reflection the Men of Kent will, doubtless, derive some consolation, and live in hope that their Petition will not long continue to be a subject of disapprobation with your Lordship.

Besides the strange notion, that

the farmers are to be relieved by the taking off of taxes so as to *leave forty millions* a year to be collected; besides the strange notion that they will be able to pay the same rents that they paid in ninety-two, when the whole of the taxes, including collection, amounted to *seventeen* millions; besides the strange notion, that they will, with the prices of ninety-two, be able to pay their share of forty millions of taxes, and pay their present rents, or even the rents of ninety-two, into the bargain; besides this strange, this wild, this visionary, and, your Lordship must allow me to say, this Corinthian notion; besides this, have you thought sufficiently of *how* the twenty millions of taxes are to be taken off? Let me put this question to you distinctly. Will you take it from the *Army*, from the *Navy*, from *Waterloo*, from the *tax-gatherers* themselves? Do you propose to reduce the half-pay and pensions? Oh, no; "those who have fought and bled" must be paid. You

will hardly take it from the tax-gatherers that are to collect forty millions a-year. Will you take any thing from the Civil List?—and will you begin with the pensions to *Burke's Executors*? As to the *Army*, do you really propose to collect forty millions of taxes every year *without an army*? Oh, no; no man, out of Bedlam entertains any notion quite so mad! It is useless, therefore, to cry out against the *extravagance* of the Government, or to say, that you do not pity the country gentlemen who have supported that extravagance. These things are all *necessary* to uphold the *Debt* and the *Boroughs*; the debt is necessary to the boroughs; and all the above-mentioned things are necessary to both. The pensions of *BURKE* and those to his *Executors* are amongst the most extravagant and profligate things that have ever been witnessed by this oppressed nation, whom they have cost more than *seventy thousand pounds* already, given to that venal scribe for being the trumpeter

to that very war, which created three-fourths of the *Debt*, and which has finally produced the ruin and famine that we behold. Yet, even that most extravagant and most profligate of all things that ever was heard of, was *necessary* to the *Debt* and *Borough-system*; and, as long as that system last, the same things must continue to be.

It is in vain, therefore, to talk about reducing taxes, unless you begin with the debt. To call upon the Ministers to pay the interest of this debt, and, at the same time, to take from them the army, the taxgatherers, and all the rest of what you call extravagant expenditure, is going beyond the *Corinthian*, it is going back to the *Egyptian*, and being like *Pharaoh*, who would have the same quantity of bricks without any allowance of straw. But (and here is *the rub*), the debt cannot be reduced without a reduction of the boroughs. *Peterborough*, *Higham Ferrers*, and all those other sweet sink-holes,

that produce us the benefit of the wisdom arising from the "*education of the country*;" sweet Winchester, Knaresborough, Calne, and all the other sweet places, must be laid open, and, in short, no longer bless us with such bundles of wisdom; or, the interest of the debt cannot be reduced. It is the debt which upholds the boroughs, and the boroughs have created the debt. Your Lordship seems to *smell* (which is full as correct as to say that you *feel*) that these dear companions are inseparable. Like Saul and Jonathan they have lived sweetly together; and *in their deaths they will not be divided*. This your Lordship seems to smell; but I can assure you, that you will never get twenty millions of taxes taken off as long as they *live*; the conclusion therefore is, and happy I am that it is such, there must be a *Reform of the Parliament*, or, the *total ruin of the present race of Farmers and Landlords*.

I need say no more as to the

subject before the House: but, in the course of your Lordship's speech, there dropped out an observation, in which I myself, though of the Brick-wall and Pavement Order, cannot help feeling, some little personal interest. Speaking of PEEL'S Bill, you said, that, "the effect of that measure had been *anticipated* by him (you) in a *speech* made *at the time*;" by the *London Tavern Petitioners*; by Dr. COPPLESTON; and *others*." Now as to the *speech* made by your Lordship at the time, in the first place, *I never heard* of it before; I can find no traces of it any where, and yet, if there be a man, that has kept a sharper look out than myself for things of this sort, I should be glad to see that man. In the next place, this speech, Corinthian though doubtless it was, certainly produced *no effect* upon the Parliament, who voted the measure *unanimously*; nor did it produce any effect upon your own party, who, it is perfectly notorious, were not only the chief

supporters, but even the inventors of the measure; and who found fault of it only because it was not *more rapid in its operations!* As to the Petitioners at the London Tavern, their interference I very well recollect; and I did, "*at the time,*" or as soon as possible afterwards, notice the sensible speech of Mr. ATTWOOD in moving that Petition. Dr. COPPLESTON wrote his pamphlet late in the year 1818, or early in the year 1819; that is to say, just before the measure was brought forward; but let it be observed that this humbug was an *advocate for the measure!* He did, indeed, say, there would be distress, but he did not contemplate distress like the present. He did not talk about the ruin of *Landlords and Parsons.* He did not talk about the *transfer of estates.* This humbug thought that nothing but paper-money people were about to be *pulled down,* and that Farmer's were about to be *lowered;* and never dreamed of what was about to take place; much less did he

ever *describe* it. But there were "*OTHERS;*" and why did your Lordship not name those *others?* It was beneath a Corinthian Pillar, I suppose, to say, that in 1811, *from Newgate* the first warning came forth in "*Paper against Gold;*" that the "*Register*" contained warning upon warning from 1814 to 1818, and that in the month of July 1818, the "*Twopenny Trash,*" in a *Letter to TIERNEY,* depicted, before-hand, not only the ruin, but the *measure* of it, and the *manner* of it, just as it has now come to pass; to say this might have been beneath a Corinthian Pillar; but, then, you may be well assured, that the public will agree with me, that the Corinthian Pillar would have done better to say nothing at all about *anticipation;* and, let me observe, in conclusion, that, it does seem a little strange, that you should have thought it proper (and at this time of day too) to refer to a speech of your own making, which *never found its way into print,* while you seem to have

wholly forgotten writings that have passed through edition after edition, and have been read, and are read, with great attention by so very large a portion of the people. Ah! Lord Milton, your stomach must come down, or, the consequences will be such as, with all your powers of *foresight*, you do not seem to “*anticipate*” in the smallest degree. It is a strange thing that none of you can perceive how much credit you would get by acting the manly part as to this matter; and, which is of full as much importance, what a triumph you give me every time you act a part of a contrary character. I am more than half convinced, that your *disapprobation of the Kentish Petition* arose from the same identical feeling, which made you recollect your own and Dr. COPPLESTON’S *anticipations*; but I am also convinced, that the county of Kent, participating in no such feeling, will remain satisfied with what it did, your Lordship’s disapprobation notwithstanding; and this I know to a certainty, that if

the rest of the nation do not follow the sensible example, the suffering in consequence will belong much more to the Corinthian Pillars than to the Order of Brick-wall and Pavement.

I am, Sir,

Your Lordship’s most obedient,

And most humble Servant,

WM. COBBETT.

To the Representatives in Parliament of the County of Kent.

As one of your constituents and one who attended the Meeting of the County on Tuesday last, I make no scruple of addressing you on what took place at that meeting. Both of you appear by the report in the Morning Chronicle on the Petition being presented to the House of Commons, to agree in opinion as to what the Meeting appeared to consider, although last, not the least valuable part of it; viz. the rider to it, calling on the Honourable House, as soon as it had reformed itself, to make a just reduction of the National Debt; *it was, I believe, by no means expected it would do so before.* You both protest against

it in the name of the County; why did not you do so at the Meeting? but I believe if you had, and with the assistance of that very modest Gentleman the Member for Wareham, and in addition all the great leading characters of the County, both Whigs and Tories, I much doubt if you would have deterred the Meeting from passing the resolution. But, Sirs, the idea of a reduction of the National Debt is not new in the County of Kent, and both of you must be aware of it; at least I know that a pamphlet was written by a Man of Kent, and on the commencement of the present Session of Parliament printed and published by Mr. SMITH, of Maidstone, recommending first a Reform in Parliament, and then a reduction of the National Debt. I also know that one of them was sent to each of you; but whether you took the trouble of reading it or not I do not know, or whether Mr. Cobbett has read that pamphlet I cannot say, but his resolution runs on all fours with that part of it respecting the reduction of the National Debt. Far from considering the county disgraced by passing the resolution, I am very glad it has taken the lead on such an occasion. Let me ask you what the Meeting was called for, was

not its object twofold, namely, to consider of a Petition to Parliament on the distressed state of the country, and the defective representation of the people? Well then, was not the National Debt contracted by Parliaments constituted in the same way as the present one, which the Meeting thought wanted reforming; as such was it not very natural for those at the Meeting to think it necessary that after the reform had taken place it would be right that the immense debt should undergo an investigation, to see if at least some part of it might not in justice be reduced, for that was the substance of the Resolution? I for one should be very sorry that justice were not done to the public creditor, but at the same time, I also wish to see justice done to the public debtor, who is now paying, and has been almost ever since the passing of Mr. Peel's Bill in 1819, at least 30s. for 20s. —That the country was brought into its present state by the holy crusade against Revolutionary France, does not admit of a doubt, and I wish to God that those who were the authors of that crusade only had to suffer for it, but (as it is too generally) in this case the innocent suffer with the guilty. Where is the justice of one class

of the community, and that not the least valuable,—I mean the middle class; namely, farmers, manufacturers,* and those in trade, being ruined before any of the other classes in society will hardly believe but that the machine works well? In conclusion I beg to say, that I think if one of two remedies are not speedily applied, viz. if the National Debt and Taxes be not reduced (and in the same proportion all private debts) so as to approximate to what they were in 1791, as all the necessities of life are; or the repeal of Mr. Peel's Bill and consequently an increase in the circulating medium, and with it *economy*, rigid *economy*, (but even then I contend we shall want a reduction of the debt, though on a less scale and by more gradual means) we must all be involved in one common ruin.

Your's, &c. &c.

A YEOMAN OF KENT.

June 15th.

* The Manufacturers appear to have rallied again; but it does not, I think, require the gift of prophecy to foresee that if the occupiers of the land, and those immediately connected with them, continue in their present deplorable condition, they will soon be reduced to perhaps as bad a state as they were a few years since.

FOR SALE

At the Office of the Register,
The *Annual Register*, from the first Volume, 1758, to the 34th Volume, 1792, one volume for each year. This work is bound in calf, in the best manner, and is as good as new.—Price *Ten Pounds*, very little more than the cost of the binding.

N. B. The *Encyclopedia*, advertised last week, was sold on Tuesday for the 20l. as advertised.—This notice is given in answer to two gentlemen, who have written for it from the country.

DINNER TO MR. WOOLER.

THIS Dinner, which was noticed last Week for the 26th instant, at Birmingham, is to be given on the 29th. The Committee, in answer to their very kind invitation, are hereby requested to receive my thanks, and to be assured, that, if a motive had been wanting in me to attend at this Dinner, their Letter would have been more than sufficient.

WM. COBBETT.

N. B. Since a part of the Register went to the press, I have received a Letter, which informs me of circumstances which render my presence at Birmingham on Monday the 29th of July *absolutely impossible*. The thing is altogether indispensable; which obliges me thus hastily to notify to the Committee at Birmingham, from whom I received the obliging invitation alluded to above, that I cannot have the honour of accepting it.

WM. COBBETT.

Friday, 19th July, 1822.